

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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- 5 1. A method for operating a telecommunications system comprises:
receiving a telephone call from an external telephone line;
determining a computer network address and switching data in response to
the telephone call;
coupling the telecommunications system with a remote
telecommunications system at the computer network address;
transmitting switching data from the telecommunications system to the
10 remote telecommunications system via the Internet; and
coupling the telephone call to an auto attendant at the remote
telecommunications system in response to the switching data.
- 15 2. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
receiving additional input from the external telephone line; and
transmitting the additional data to the remote telecommunications system;
wherein the additional data is processed by the auto attendant.
- 20 3. The method of claim 2 wherein the additional data comprises
DTMF tones.
- 25 4. The method of claim 2 wherein the additional data comprises voice
data.
5. The method of claim 2 further comprising receiving response data
from the auto attendant, the response data determined in response to the additional data.
- 30 6. The method of claim 5 wherein the response data comprises a
directory of names.
7. The method of claim 3 wherein the additional data comprises a
telephone number.

8. The method of claim 3 wherein the DTMF tones represent a menu selection.

5 claim 1.

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10. A method for operating a telecommunications system comprises:
receiving a telephone call from an external telephone line into the
telecommunications system;

10 coupling the external telephone line to an auto-attendant at the
telecommunications system;

outputting a menu selection message to the external telephone line;

receiving input data from the external telephone line for the auto attendant
via a wide area network, in response to the menu selection message;

15 determining a computer network address and switching data in response to
the input data;

coupling the telecommunications system with a remote
telecommunications system at the computer network address;

20 transmitting switching data from the telecommunications system to the
remote telecommunications system; and

coupling the telephone call to a telephone coupled the remote
telecommunications system in response to the switching data.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein the menu selection message
25 comprises a directory of selectable options.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein the input data represents a menu
selection in response to the directory of selectable options.

30 13. The method of claim 11 wherein the directory of selectable options
comprises a directory of selectable names.

14. The method of claim 13 wherein the input data comprises DTMF

tones.

15. The method of claim 13 wherein the directory of selectable options comprises a directory of selectable names.

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16. The method of claim 10 wherein the menu selection message is programmable.

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17. The method of claim 10 further comprising:
when input data from the external telephone line is not received within a predetermined period of time, un-coupling the external telephone line from the telecommunications system.

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18. The method of claim 17 wherein the period of time is programmable.

19. The method of claim 17 wherein the menu selection message is determined in response to a particular time of day.

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20. A telecommunications server operated as described in claim 10.

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21. A method for operating a telecommunications system comprises:
receiving a telephone call from a telephone extension coupled to the telecommunications system;
determining a computer network address identifier and connection data in response to the telephone call;
coupling the telecommunications system with a telecommunications system at the computer network address;
transmitting connection data from the telecommunications system to the telecommunications system at the computer network address via a computer network; and
coupling the telephone call to an auto attendant at the telecommunications system at the computer network address in response to the connection data.

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22. The method of claim 21 further comprising:
receiving additional data from the telephone extension; and
transmitting the additional data to the telecommunications system at the
computer network address;

5 wherein the additional data is processed by the auto attendant.

23. The method of claim 22 wherein coupling the telecommunications
system with a telecommunications system at the computer network address comprises using
the computer network.

10 24. The method of claim 23 wherein the computer network comprises the
Internet.

25. The method of claim 24 wherein the computer network also comprises
15 a local area network.

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26. The method of claim 24 wherein transmitting connection data from the
telecommunications system comprises:

20 packetizing the connection data to form packetized data; and
transmitting the packetized data to the telecommunications system at the
computer network address via the Internet.

27. The method of claim 26 wherein the additional data comprises DTMF
tones.

28. A telephone system configured to operate as described in claim 21.

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29. A computer program product configured to direct the telephone system
to operate as described in claim 21.

30 The method of claim 21 wherein the telecommunications system and
the telecommunications system at the computer network address are the same.

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